

Ring Praise Music Ministry 2013 Compilation Journal

Community Presbyterian Church, King Hill, ID, 4-5-13

Each year we love sharing the gospel and our music with the King Hill and Glens Ferry communities. The assisted living center in Glens Ferry brought their bus with many residents as they have done for the last several years. An offering was taken for the local food bank.

Ron was able to go with us and read the narrations. It is always nice to have him along and to read. This gives Phyllis time to get set up for each song as the narration is read. When he is not along, if there is quite a bit of set up, Sean will read a narration.

The kids present plus some adults did a great job with the sand blocks on *Glory Bound*. It is always fun when there aren't six kids to ask those who are there to bring an adult with them.

Afterward a wonderful assortment of food was enjoyed by all. This gave us a great time to visit with all those attending. Many have been to several of our concerts. We always drive home from King Hill thanking God for the dedication of this church to the Lord and keeping the doors opening spreading His word of salvation.

New Meadows United Methodist Church, New Meadows, ID, 4-22-13

In December 2012 we did a Christmas concert at the church. Since the church is on the way to the area of Montana we were heading, they gladly organized a concert for us. The church now has a pastor, but when they were searching for one, church leaders led all the parts of the service except preaching. Stramm sermons were streamed and shown on a screen in the sanctuary. This is a very creative and resourceful way for a small church to have sermons when they didn't have a pastor.

We were hosted by the same two couples who hosted us in December – what a delight and had a wonderful dinner with Phyllis's hosts. There was glorious singing during the ring-a-long. Phyllis was on the planning committee for a state P.E.O. convention in Boise May 3-5. One of the chapters involved is from McCall and a couple of their members came to the concert. There were no questions, but as Phyllis was taking down the bell tree after *Symphonia on Hyfydol*, one person asked, "When are you coming back?"

There was a wonderful array of delicious goodies in the fellowship hall after the concert which gave us the opportunity to visit with all those attending. We had a long drive the next morning so we met early at a local coffee shop thanking God for the great start to our tour and getting some delicious coffee for the road.

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Kalispell, MT, 4-23-13

After an incredibly gorgeous 360 mile drive including scenic highway 12 across Idaho and along the west side of Flathead Lake in Montana, we arrived at the church. The flowing rivers, beautiful lake, and snow-capped mountains were a constant reminder of our Creator. His majesty was visible everywhere. Knowing we would be driving through such beautiful country is probably why the concert included *This Is My Father's World*.

Seventy people attended the Spirit-filled concert. The singing during Ring Along was glorious. The church as a 21 rank Moller pipe organ which Sean used to accompany Phyllis on *He Leadeth Me*. This song lends itself well to using an organ instead of piano. There are active handbell choirs at this church as well as the Episcopal Church and many members of these choirs were at the concert. After seeing Phyllis's extensive use of 4-in-hand, one lady after the concert commented that she was inspired to do some of it in choir. There is a very nice commons area just off the sanctuary where they served coffee and tea after the concert so we had a wonderful place to visit with everyone. In previous years, the choir has attended the Big Sky Handbell Festival and a few people remembered Phyllis playing a solo at one of them.

The music director at the church directs the handbell choir and is also the organist/pianist. He was our contact for setting up the concert and took us out for a delicious breakfast at a local restaurant/food market. Phyllis stayed with the vocal choir director while Sean was hosted by a couple who lived on a peninsula on a nearby lake. What a delight!

After breakfast, we took a small trip into Glacier National Park, West entrance. We were able to drive about 9 miles along Lake McDonald before the road was closed. Incredible mountains! On our way back down to

Missoula, we drove on the east side of Flathead Lake which is the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi River.

First Presbyterian Church, Missoula, MT, 4-24-13

The handbell choir did an awesome job hosting us! Not only did they greet people and hand out programs, but they provided wonderful refreshments afterward in the area just outside the sanctuary. Fifty-five people attended. This church also has a lovely pipe organ which Sean used to accompany Phyllis on *He Leadeth Me*.

For Ring Along, we also used some of their chimes so the sound was very full and most people were able to ring on two of the three songs. There were no kids in the audience, but we drafted some adults to play the sand blocks in *Glory Bound*. They were very enthusiastic and creative with their rhythm!

We stayed with the handbell choir director, Tomi, and her husband who prepared an amazing salmon dinner for us before the concert. Members of the bell choir asked where we had dinner, and when we said that Fred cooked salmon for us, they smiled and knew we were well fed. He is known for wonderful meals. Both of them play trombone and are members of various symphonies as well as part of a trombone choir that has toured internationally. Phyllis and Tomi talked about bells and found out they were each attending National Seminar in Portland, Oregon in July. Neither had a roommate yet – they do now!

St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Shelby, MT, 4-25-13

After another beautiful drive through some mountains, we came to I-15 just north of Great Falls and took it to Shelby which is only 30 miles from the Canadian border. Was it windy! Diane, our contact for the concert, was the inspiration behind the entire Montana tour. She is the Montana Chair for Area 10 of Handbell Musicians of America so Phyllis has worked on the board with her. Several times she has asked Phyllis when we were going to come to Montana!

Diane directs the handbell choir at church which has the only handbells in the town. The bell choir had worked hard with lots of great refreshments afterward giving us another opportunity to visit with so many of the people who attended the concert. About 50 people came and worshiped with us.

After driving over 800 miles and giving 4 concerts in 4 days, we were glad to only have a 25 mile drive on Friday. We spent the morning with Diane. She and Phyllis talked about some handbell business, and then Diane and Sean “jammed” for a while after breakfast. She has a beautifully trained voice and loved the opportunity to sing through some pieces with Sean. Phyllis enjoyed the “concert” as she worked on registrar details for a convention in Boise as soon as she returned.

Following lunch at a Chinese restaurant, we headed for Conrad feeling rested and rejuvenated; after setting up in Conrad, Sean took a nap! Too much relaxation made him tired.

First Presbyterian Church, Conrad, MT, 4-26-13

Whenever possible, we like to have the handbell tables up in the chancel area rather than on the floor of a sanctuary. This gives everyone a better view. At this church, there was about 9 feet 4 inches between 2 fixed rails in the chancel area so Phyllis's 9 feet of table fit perfectly. The bell tree pole needed to set behind the table rather than to the side. The setup looked beautiful filling the open area of the chancel; it just added a little challenge getting in there by walking along one of the pews for the choir. Phyllis didn't attempt the processional down the aisle with *Lauda Anima*, but rather started by a door in the very front and walked up to the table.

Dennis, the Past Chair of Area 10 of Handbell Musicians of America as well as the organizer of the Big Sky Handbell Festival in Great Falls the next day came with a few others from his choir. He also brought the guest clinician for the festival, Fred Gramann, from Paris, France. There were several other handbell ringers in the audience both from the church and from Billings who were in the area for the festival and visiting family in Conrad.

Like several of the other churches we visited, this one had a nice organ which Sean used on *He Leadeth Me*. For sand blocks on *Glory Bound*, there were 3 kids so we asked them to bring an adult with them!

Following the concert, a couple came up to Sean and said that they truly felt the Holy Spirit moving and said that they came into God's presence through worship. They really appreciated the fact that the concert was actually a worship service.

We stayed with a delightful couple who deliciously fed us and graciously took us in like family. She is a member of the church handbell choir and was also attending the festival in Great Falls so we were able to see her at the festival and also her husband who drove down for the concert Sunday afternoon. As we travel, we so enjoy the home stays where we get to better know some of the people.

Big Sky Handbell Festival, Great Falls, MT, April 27-28, 2013

Our Montana tour was planned around this festival so we could both attend. As Phyllis was arranging for concerts, she also found a choir from First Presbyterian Church in Bozeman who could take us in as ringers. Sean rang C4D4 and Phyllis rang G4A4, both in the bass clef. A choir member was between us and commented how nice it was to have someone on each side. During rehearsals, it was hard to play with those positions open. This is an annual handbell conference and moves around the state. Since some Idaho Falls choirs faithfully attend, they organized the event several years ago and are hosting it next year.

We arrived late Saturday morning and set up for playing *The Church's One Foundation* later that afternoon. This is a time when all the ringers can sit in the bleachers and be the audience. Phyllis has played a solo at a few other Big Sky Festivals, but it has been at the final concert so the audience sees, but the ringers don't. After setting up, Dennis Dell, the event organizer, asked if she would take Fred to lunch. Of course! What a bonus for us to be able to take the guest conductor to lunch! Since he was at our concert the night before and Dennis asked Phyllis if she would also play in the final concert, she asked Fred which piece he would like her to play. He requested *Symphonia on Hyfrydol*. She told him that Dennis liked *Shine, Jesus, Shine* so he said we just needed to play both!

There were about 250 ringers who worked on nine pieces of music with guest clinician Fred Gramann from Paris, France. We rehearsed Saturday 1:00 – 5:30 pm and Sunday 8:15 – 11:30 am. Then there were 2 opportunities for lunch and classes (Phyllis taught one class on solo ringing) followed by a concert for the community at 2:00 pm. It was great to see many ringers we had met on our tour. Saturday evening we had the added pleasure of attending the Great Falls Symphony concert where Dame Evelyn Glennie was the guest artist.

First Baptist Church, Cascade, MT, 4-28-13

Knowing we would be finished with the Big Sky Festival mid-afternoon on Sunday, Phyllis searched for a place near Great Falls that would host a concert that evening. Looking at a map, the town of Cascade was about 20 miles from Great Falls. A website for the town listed the churches and service times, and the First Baptist Church had a Sunday evening service at 7:00 pm. Phyllis called the pastor, offered a concert for their service, and he said yes!

What a friendly church community! Many come early just to sit and chat over a cup of coffee in the fellowship hall. The building is small, but the congregation is very active and Spirit-filled. Hearty “amens” were given after each song and even to parts of our narration. The piano hadn't been played for a while and they were concerned if it would be okay – it did well. One couple at the concert had heard us in Kalispell, were in the area, and came to hear us again.

For *Glory Bound*, there were 7 kids who enthusiastically heated up the sand blocks to be the most awesome “train.” Could almost see smoke coming off the blocks. Before and afterward, the kids had a great time playing hide and seek. What a delight to see all of them having so much fun.

We were hosted by a gracious lady who has a ranch in the mountains at 4800 feet about 15 miles from the church. We followed her Sunday night in the dark and were awed by the beauty when we woke up in the morning. After breakfast, she drove us up the mountain a little farther for breathtaking views. Phyllis is so thankful we are playing *This Is My Father's World* at the concerts. His creation is so magnificent!

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Billings, MT, 4-29-13

There was a detour on the way to Billings that provided us with a gorgeous drive along a river and past Showdown Mountain Ski Resort with base elevation at 6800 feet and top elevation at 8200 feet. We also found a great local restaurant along the way for lunch.

The church has a beautiful sanctuary with excellent acoustics, a lovely pipe organ and grand piano. Our contact was the music director who has been there for 6 years. It was a delight getting to know her. She gave each of

us a copy of a bell CD a group had made a few years ago and also a book that she had published, *The Light Shines in the Darkness*. We shared a copy of *Ring Praise 3* with her.

This was the third time we have played in Billings, but the first time at this church. Several people who had heard us before were there including the mother of one of our Ring Praise Music Ministry board members. The church has an active handbell choir and most of the ringers were there and helped with programs and delicious refreshments afterward.

We stayed with a delightful couple who had recently joined the church. She does stained glass and we were in awe of the beautiful creations she has made. In the morning we had a tour of her shop. She also had some beautiful quilt placemats. Phyllis got her camera and captured a cool view of the fabric. Since the drive to Bozeman wouldn't be too long, we stopped by a coffee shop to get some work done before hitting the road.

First Presbyterian Church, Bozeman, MT, 4-30-13

Even though it was the end of April, we had a few snow flurries with high winds on our drive to Bozeman. The church is downtown which makes it ideal to open their doors and large building to many ministries for the community. One of the groups is the Opera Company in Bozeman. Sean had a chance to speak with several singers that he has performed with. Another person who attended was one of Sean's friends from college.

The daughter of the people we stayed with in Billings lives just outside Bozeman. Her mom called her and encouraged her to attend the concert. She and her husband did, and came up afterward to ring a bell. It was so delightful to meet her after staying with her parents.

Most members of the handbell choir were among the 45 people who attended the concert. It was great to see them again since we rang with them at the Big Sky Festival. Phyllis has known the director for several years. The church has a beautiful pipe organ and large Yamaha grand piano. Afterward, Sean played some music on both the piano and organ for several of the people who were still there.

When everything was packed up and we opened the door to load the van, it was like a blizzard! In the morning, there was about an inch of snow. After a delightful breakfast with the handbell choir director and her husband, we headed home. While we enjoy every church and community we are in, God blessed us with the beauty of Montana and many churches with active ministries and missions. We are so thankful that He has given us the gifts to share the gospel with our ministry.